

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

INDUSTRIAL TRAINING FOR THE WORKER, NOT THE WORK

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Industrial Training for the Worker, Not the Work

James S. Hiatt, Secretary Public Education Association,
Philadelphia, Pa.



AS it Bob Burdette who said, "The more I see of folks the better I like dogs?" If so, he might well have added, "The more I see of the American school the better I like my clothes."

When, a generation after the establishment of the public-school system in many of our commonwealths, some keen-minded Yankee tailor thought to turn an honest penny by providing for the New Bedford sailors and wharfmen suits of clothes which they might put on at once rather than forcing them to wait for personal measurement and the tedious processes of hand-sewing, he builded better than he knew. By 1850 when the sewing machine came to the aid of the hand workers, the business had grown from the making of a few ill-fitting garments to an important industry, mostly in supplying the rough clothing of the workers in the South and West.

Not until the introduction of the rotary knife, which made possible the cutting of a dozen or more thicknesses at once, and the coming of Russian-Jewish immigrant labor, with the consequent specialization of processes, about the time of the Centennial, could any comparison be made between the fit and service of "ready-made" garments with those made by the draper or merchant-tailor.

But alert business minds, whose success depended on producing a saleable article, concentrated their effort on this industry. In less than three-quarters of a century they have developed that scientific management which has meant fitting the object to its needs. Thus our clothing industry has passed from the period of individual and mostly home-made products, thru the stage when baggy "slop-chest clothes" of cheap grade were made in few sizes and little variation of type, to the time when a man, be he long or short, fat or thin, can secure his own type of garment.

Clothing the Mind.

We pay half as much for educating our youth in America as for our clothes. And yet in our public schools we dwell in the ante-bellum days. We still furnish ready-made brains, all of the same pattern. Is it any wonder that the "hand-me-down" minds of our children become lop-sided and bag at the knees, when we try to fit them all with the same style of garment?

A child's mind must be unusually deformed before we will give him "custom-made" treatment in a special

class. And when we gather a group of these classes of incorrigibles, delinquents, defectives, together into an organized school, we are more than apt to call this an "industrial" school. These classes are for "atypical" children, which means that we have set up a standard average boy who must be able to accomplish certain abstract tasks along certain prescribed lines by a specified age, or our standard machinery breaks down and the child is cast aside as a failure.

Since 85 per cent of those whom we teach in our public schools will earn their livelihood thru industrial processes, may they not be the real type; and if we are to succeed with them, must we not fit the educational garment to the individual child?

It may not be possible to have a tailor-made brain for each child, but it certainly will be possible, and is necessary, to organize a system which shall meet the needs of the great groups of children who tho similar to each other are distinctly different from numerous other groups in our systems. We must fit the hand-minded, the book-minded, the word-minded, with the same skill that our modern clothier fits the tall or the short, the stout or the thin.

Life-Work Training in the School.

While America has always stood for an enlightened democracy, and while education has been the watchword from the time of our forefathers, under the domination of the so-called cultural ideal our schools have lost their hold on our youth at the very time when they most need a guiding hand. Today it is stated that more than six million boys and girls between 14 and 16 years of age are employed in various ways in this country. More than 70 per cent of these child workers never went beyond the seventh grade; less than 60 per cent of them ever reached the sixth grade. How many of them, under present conditions, have been trained for their life work?

In Philadelphia, over 42 per cent of the pupils between 14 and 16 years of age have left school and gone to work. More than 1,700 boys and girls in that city each month secure working papers and are lost sight of by society. A recent study made by the Public Education Association of the child-workers in that community has shown the types of jobs held by these youthful toilers. By this study it was found that more than 37 per cent of the boys and 49 per cent of the girls were employed in factories.

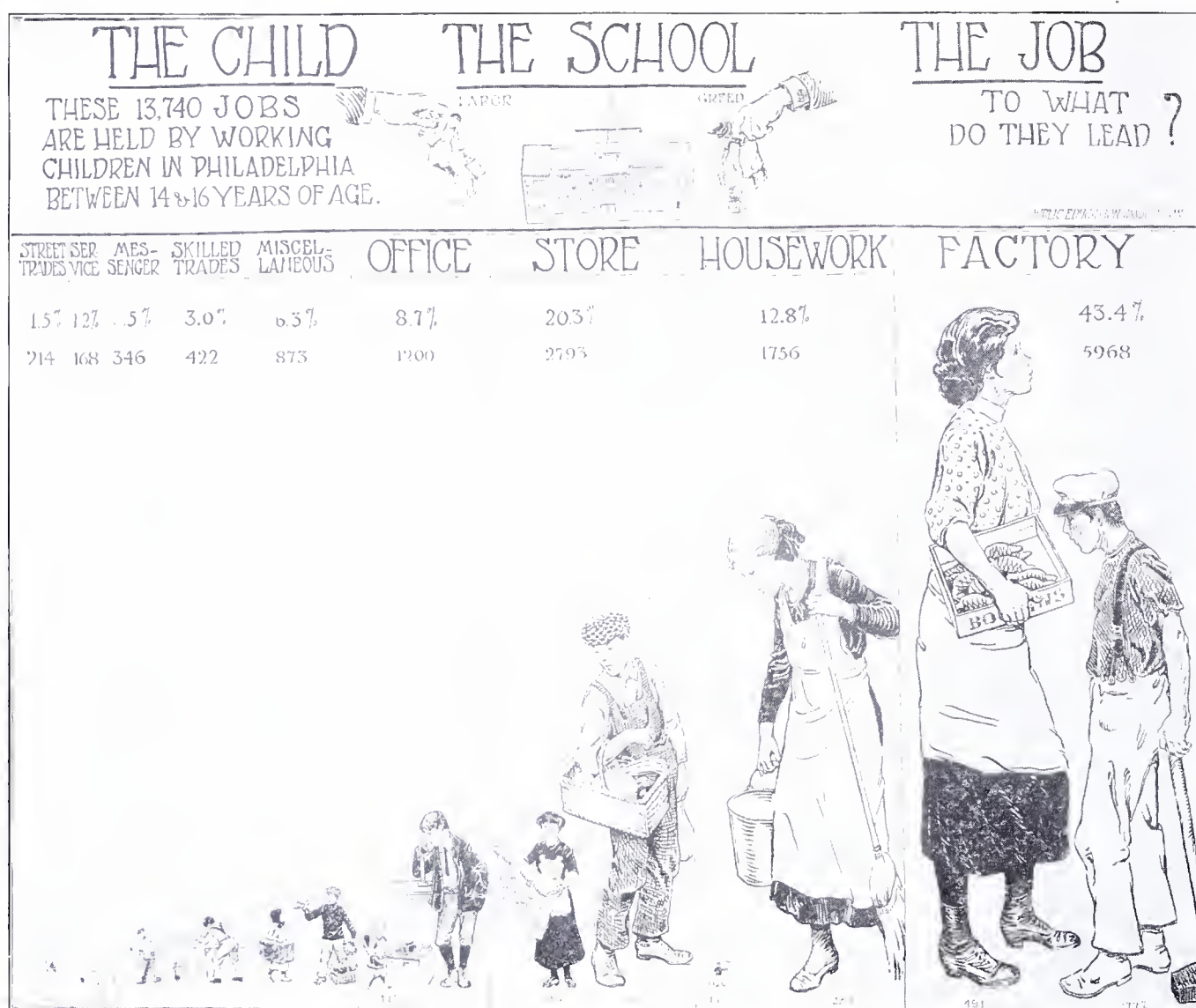


Chart I. Distribution of Child Workers by Industries.

The number and percentage of child-workers between 14 and 16 years of age, in each occupation, is shown in the following table:

Occupations	Number	Per Cent
Store	2,793	20.3
Office	1,200	8.7
Messenger	346	2.5
Factory	5,968	43.4
Street Trades	214	1.5
Skilled Trades	422	3.0
Service	168	1.2
Housework	1,756	12.8
Miscellaneous	873	6.3
Total.....	13,740	100.0

Chart I shows graphically the distribution of these child-workers by industries. It is notable that only 3 per cent have entered a skilled industry which would give them an opportunity for training for a life career.

The Vanishing Point.

We know that less than 20 per cent of our public-school pupils enter the higher schools. The rest have dropped by the wayside for one of four reasons:

(a) Because the parents failed to see the value of further education of the kind now received.

(b) Because of the natural desire of the adolescent for greater freedom.

(c) Because of real or imagined economic pressure.

(d) Because the break between the grammar and high school in our present system induces many to believe that they have "finished".

The vast majority of those who leave enter low grade industries, untrained, unguided, unguarded, where they average between \$4 and \$4.50 per week while at work; where they jump from job to job, with consequent loss to the industry and to themselves. By 18 they have reached their maximum wage, and by 30 they begin to go down hill.

This is the reason why vocational training and guidance are absorbing the best efforts of constructive thinkers, both in industry and in education. Already vast commercial enterprises are refusing to accept applicants for positions in their establishments unless they can pass a distinctive test of their ability. Already many firms are spending large sums of money on the proper training of their employees.

The Man or His Work.

If we are to prevent a vast waste of time, energy, and money, two problems must be faced:

First, if we are to test the adaptability of an individual to his work, why wait until he has spent valu-

able time and much money in preparing for a specific job, before applying the test?

Second, why should the test be made only to show whether the individual shall fit the industry? Should we not study as well the fitness of the industry for the worker?

The solution of these problems, the choosing of the job for the man, not the man for the job, the fitting of the youth for and into his life career—this is Vocational Guidance.

This task, so intimately connected with the growth of the individual, and so vital as a goal and outlet for all the training given to the child, is a new function of the commonwealth, if the state is to fulfil its mission to its citizens. It is a task which cannot be done at one stroke, but must be accomplished by such a careful feeling out of the capabilities of the child, "such an unearthing somewhere beneath the irrepressible child surface of that which will point the way to what the child can do and do well in a work-a-day world," as only the school with its constant observation and sympathetic daily contact can perform.

Vocational Guidance is not a new thing, but it must be handled in a new way. The school has always guided vocationally, tho without intent. By abstract tests and examinations it has permitted the chosen few to go

thru the portals into professional training. The others, its so-called failures, it has doomed to manual pursuits.

Under present conditions of modern life when industry is divided into a thousand parts, and when the home has lost its grip on or acquaintance with the boy, he is left to stumble and grope for himself. Less than 5 per cent of the males of the nation are fitted by definite educational training for the occupation or vocation they eventually enter.

Before and After the 14th Birthday.

Before he is 14 years of age the law says the boy is a ward of the state, and must attend school. The day after he has passed his 14th birthday, he slips from the hands of the law and becomes an industrial unit, independent—a man—facing the freedom, license and struggle of manhood in a complex, industrial world.

Today we permit our girls immediately after their 14th birthday to go out upon our streets and into our factories to sell to the highest bidder, often a man whom we would not permit to deliver us a bottle of milk unless under the watchful eyes of the law, to sell to this man the most precious possession they have—their lives—in toil; and the Pennsylvania law is today so framed that altho no child is supposed to get his working papers and be released from school unless a definite job is in sight: when the child gets a job and loses it, possibly within

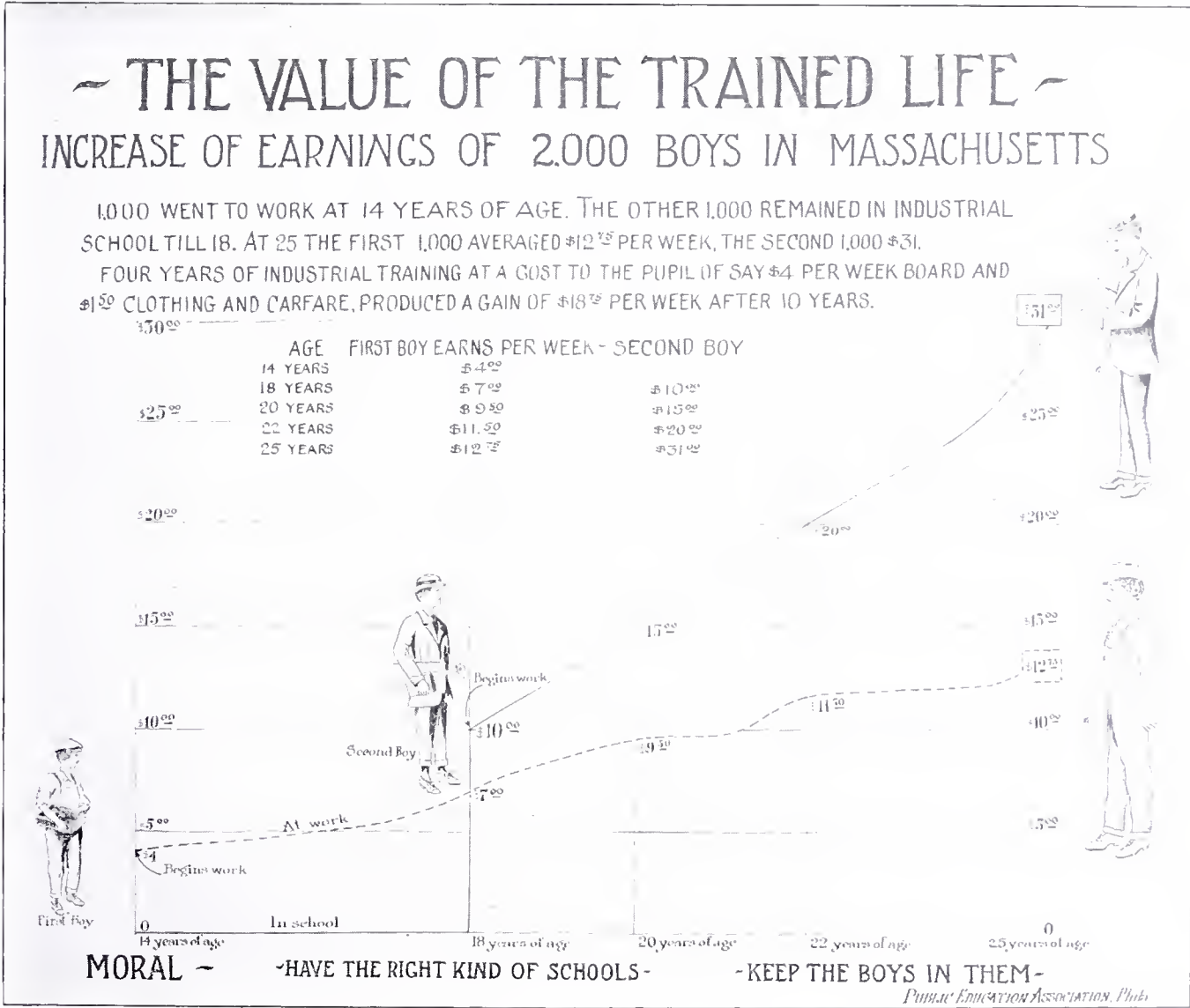


Chart II. Result of Vocational Education in Massachusetts.

one, two or three weeks' time, he can still retain his working papers and is free to live and loaf upon the streets and alleys, beyond the oversight of the educational authorities.

These youthful floaters are indeed the most evident outcome of our present wasteful methods, both in education and in industry. It is said that in New York there are 70,000 such youths, in Chicago 30,000, in Boston 12,000, and in smaller Milwaukee 6,000. One expert in the study of these conditions has made it a rule of thumb in average industrial cities of 20,000 and up, that one-eightieth of the total population will be found to be these 14 to 16-year-old loafers or untrained workers. This is not merely the problem of child labor. It is not alone the problem of the success or failure of our industries. It is the problem of the conservation of our youth, of the making of the most effective manhood and womanhood of those in our care.

The remedy in its broadest form, the proper social adjustment between the school and the job—such training as will prepare the youth for industrial efficiency for the sake of the producer rather than of the product—is Vocational Guidance. This is vastly different from training the employes of a given industry for a higher standard of efficiency. Beginning with the earliest days of education it aims to serve the man rather than the matter. It aims to produce a more skillful worker and to find for him his most suitable sphere of activity, in the full realization that more and better work must follow.

That such training when undertaken by the state will pay both the worker and the state can well be seen by the results of a recent study in Massachusetts, as shown in Chart II.

Vocational Guidance is Educational Guidance.

In this process of guidance three steps may be suggested as having an important bearing:

(1) The transformation of our present school system, particularly in the seventh and eighth grades, so that a broader experience of real life may be gained by our pupils.

(2) The development of continuation schools, so that the ereation of skill in a given industry and the gaining of additional technical knowledge from the school may go hand in hand.

(3) Direct guidance into specific industries of those who have had definite preparation in our school systems.

The purpose of this entire change is to bring our schools into definite relation with life, and to accept the responsibility of the training of all our youth, not merely the 15 per cent who are able to go forward to further academic or professional careers. Last year Philadelphia spent more than a million and a half dollars for the high-school training of 13,039 of its youth. But for the 13,742 of its boys and girls between 14 and 16 years of age, who because they came from poorer homes and harder surroundings needed more distinctly the oversight and care of the state, she spent not one cent, except in the opportunity offered to the few who were able, after a long day's toil, to sit at desks for two hours a night, three nights a week.

Training for Life's Competitions.

Realizing the need of training for community life, for a common understanding, for a common social background, this nation spends each year nearly \$420,000,000 on her public schools, in providing the tools of common knowledge. But she is beginning to realize that this ancient idea is outworn. It is outworn only in so far as it is incomplete. It is still necessary, and it will always be necessary, to train our youth so that they may co-operate with each other, so that they may be a part of the great group of citizens. But America is today beginning to face a new responsibility. Not only must she accept the duty of furnishing the elements of co-operation, the simple tools of knowledge; she must furnish her children with the elements of industrial understanding. She must train them for the competitions of life, not merely in such skill of hand, but in such breadth of understanding that they may become better workers, able to stand as self-supporting citizens in an industrial community.

Those who believe in Vocational Guidance plead for the practical training of all the pupils in our schools, not merely so that they may be turned out as skilled workmen ready to place America upon an even basis in competition with German industries, but for the sake of broadening the individual himself. The business men and manufacturers of America do not need to have skilled journeymen turned out of our schools ready for advanced positions, nor is it a function of the state to furnish such complete skill. What is needed rather is an open mind, a development of character, qualities of individual initiative, accuracy, self-reliance, sincerity, responsibility, earnestness, gumption. The problem before us is how to create these characteristics, how to give the boy not instead of, but besides, such basic requirements as reading, writing, a mastery of number relations, and the outlines of geography, such a general understanding of industrial processes, such sense training and efficient control of the hand, as will make the gaining of skill in industry a short and easy process.

The Reorganization of the School System.

While the need of giving the boy a more practical training in life may not be the fundamental reason, it is certainly very closely connected with the cause of the recent wide-spread movement toward the reorganization of our school system from the kindergarten thru the high school. Schoolmen everywhere have come to realize that unless they can secure a more definite knowledge of the development of those under their care than can be gained thru a rating of 60, 70, or 80 per cent in arithmetic, spelling, geography, or any other abstract school subject, they can be of but little service in guiding adolescent boys and girls into their proper life-work or in helping them to prepare for this work. Nor can this be done merely by securing shop-trained men with experience in one or two lines of industry to act as manual training teachers, and to assume the responsibility of guiding our youth in their development.

In reorganizing the school system to meet this evident need, three fundamental facts stand out clearly: (1) That the training of the senses must have a more

definite part—a far larger part—in the work of the schools than ever before. (2) That at some time in the course a definite opportunity must be given for the boys and girls in our care to observe various types of vocations, and to try simple processes of all the fundamental industries, those relating to food, clothing and shelter; so that they may have placed before their minds the opportunities and the requirements of specific lines of industry, with a definite chance under guidance, to choose a general line for their future career. (3) That later in the course definite time must be given for preparation in the fundamentals of this industry.

The first of these requirements can be met in the first six grades of the common school. Here the pupil should secure the wisest and best type of sense training, so that he may learn to hear with his brain as well as with his ears, to see with his mind as well as with his eyes, and to be able to do wisely, accurately and efficiently whatever he finds to do with his hands.

Pre-Vocational Training.

The second step is the crucial one upon which the interest of educators is largely focussed. It is the effort to find something of real value to take the place of the old academic review of the seventh and eighth grades, to meet the adolescent interests and needs at the time when thousands of boys and girls are floating away from the schools, not, as has been supposed, because of economic necessity—not more than 30 per cent of those who leave at this time can be said to do so from the pressure of poverty—but largely because youth seeking freedom and an opportunity to choose his own course, has grown tired of the strict surveillance and formal routine of the school system. Joining with the seventh and eighth grades the ninth, or first year of the high school, many are proposing a new division of the course, called the Junior High School, whose prime purpose it is to give a wide view of life “in connection with the growth in general intelligence and the mastery of the cultural tools, such a knowledge and interest in the occupations of life, and such ideals and skill as will make for efficiency and well-being not only of the individual, but of the community and the state of which he is a part.”

The development of suitable courses to meet this plan is a fairly simple matter in such great municipal schools as Number 62 in Greater New York, where there are nearly 3,000 students in the seventh and eighth grades. But since less than 37 per cent of our population live in great urban centers, the problem is really one for the smaller community with one highly developed industry or numerous lesser ones. It is toward this field that our constructive thought must be directed.

It is not the intention in the Junior High School to supplant nor to cripple the fundamental work of the public schools, nor to provide trade training in any sense, but to give such pre-vocational training, such samples of industry, as will make a definite, reasonable choice of a life career not only possible but probable, such a choice as will show the youth the necessity for future training if he expects to climb the ladder to success.

Such a process means a complete transformation of our school system, a complete change of our treatment of adolescence, a new and more definite purpose for the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. It means bringing the school into contact with life in the truest sense. The teachers must brush away the cobwebs and open their windows toward a work-a-day world, to make a definite attempt to find the needs of industry, the characteristics of definite jobs, and the type of workman that will succeed in them.

Not all of this knowledge need be gained thru practice at the bench or lathe. Much may be learned by observation groups which are organized to take trips thru and make as careful investigations as may be of the various industries in the community. Today thousands of men enter a specific industry or profession without any idea of the characteristics necessary for success in that vocation. They may spend years of their lives in training to be poor lawyers, when they might have been just as honorable and far more content as good blacksmiths or carpenters. Realizing that all knowledge is special, not general, we are coming to feel that the public school must give an opportunity for definite training in his own line of development to each of those who enter its gates if our education is to be thoroly democratic.

Mrs. Helen T. Wooley, of Cincinnati, recently put the case this way: “The early idea of vocational guidance seemed to be that our occupational life included a reasonable number of definite jobs for which there existed an equal number of thoroly fit individuals, but that some of the square-peg individuals had gotten into round-holed occupations and that, if by some mysterious process a new shuffle could take place, and all the square pegs be placed in the square holes, life would be ideal. We have come to realize, however, that when an individual is trained for an occupation into which he cannot fit, he needs not merely a change of occupation; he is really spoiled for the best success in any occupation. Individual cases of adaptability may be found, but the mass of men change but little after a few years in industry.”

The kind of Vocational Guidance that the youth needs is that kind which will keep him in school longer, and the kind of Vocational Guidance which the school needs is the kind that will help it carry the boys and girls forward thru the grades further and faster.

Vocational Training.

When, thru pre-vocational training and observation, and thru the expert guidance of the teacher-friend who has learned to feel out his capabilities, the boy has chosen a general line of occupation for his life career, he should enter a period of vocational training, which may cover the last three years of his high-school course. With at least 15 per cent of the pupils in the high school this vocational training will be preparation for the professions or for a higher academic or technical career. Courses must also be offered which will continue the general education. But it seems incontrovertible that, for a majority of the students in the public schools, the training must be so shaped that it will prepare for com-

mercial life, for agriculture, for household arts, or for the industries.

This vocational training, which should be given only by those who have had both the practical experience and the special preparation necessary to teach it properly, will give our boys and girls that equipment which is necessary for successful bread-winning. This training, which will be general in its nature, will provide skill in those operations which are more or less common to the typical industries of the community. If possible this training should be given in co-operation with a specific industry. The state cannot afford to develop men who

opportunity for a square deal, and will see that the pupil has learned how to sell his services to the best advantage. Then, after the job has been secured, the school either thru its own agents, or thru co-operation with accredited volunteer organizations, will follow the pupil into the home and into the shop, to assist him in taking advantage of every opportunity for advancement in skill and in position.

A Guide to Promotion.

Under this new plan the school will not rest satisfied, however, with training and guiding its pupils for

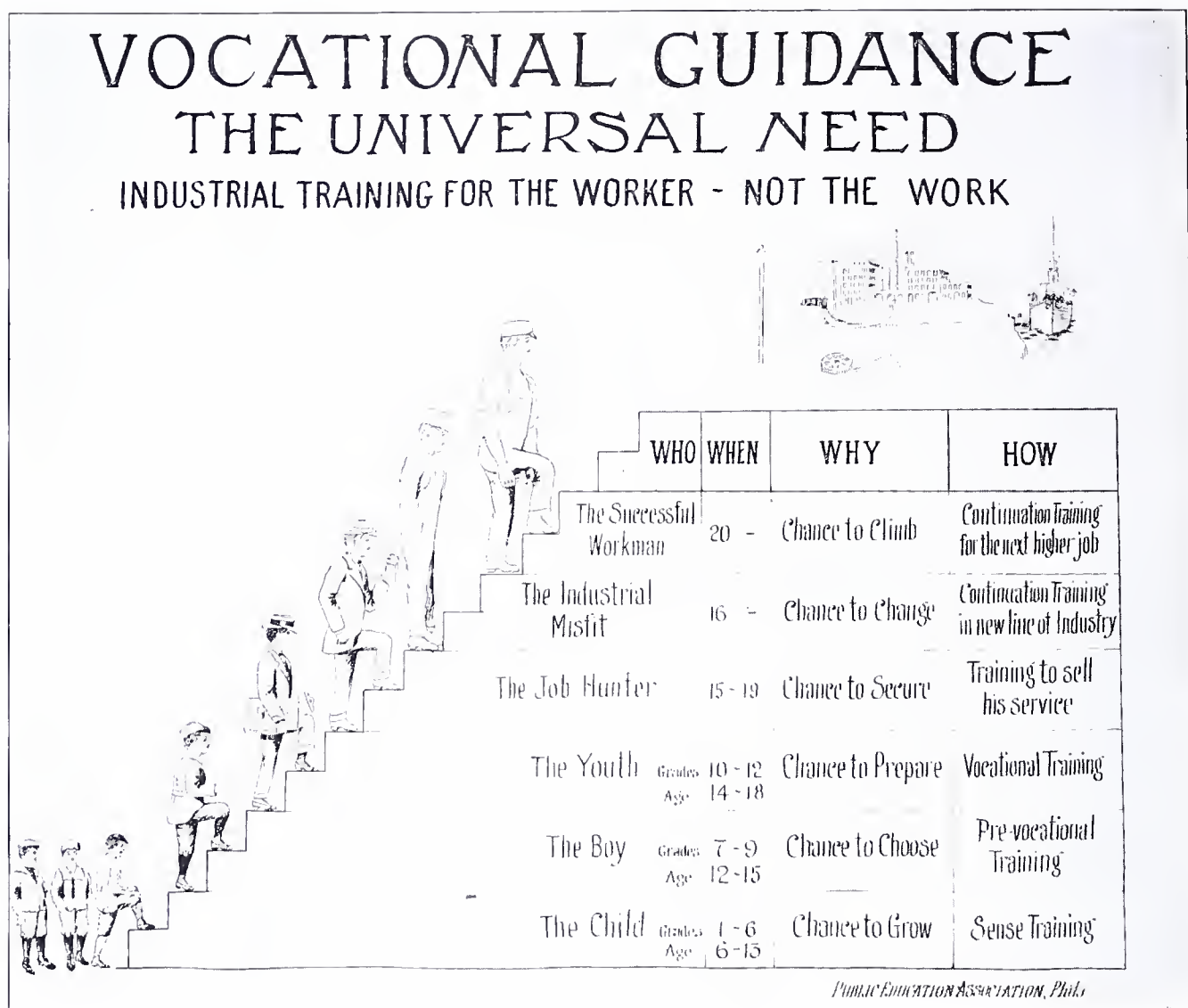


Chart III. Effect of Vocational Guidance.

are all feet or all hands or all ears or all tongues. But it must be responsible for efficient citizens, for well-rounded men.

The transformation of the school system, with the added function of guidance thru training of both successful and unsuccessful workmen, may be graphically shown in Chart III.

Specific Guidance.

For the job hunter, be he 14, 18, or 21, the school which has taught him, and which has helped him choose his life career, will assist in the responsibility of securing the best position from which to make the start in life. The school will be in sufficiently close touch with industry to know the employers who will give the best

man's estate. At least two other classes will claim its attention and demand expert direction and care.

First, the unsuccessful worker who today is discouraged; a misfit. For him society must offer a means of training in some line of industry in which his efforts may have a better chance of success. This continuation training must be closely allied with that type of guidance which will choose the position for the worker and not rest satisfied with testing the worker to see whether he be fit for the work.

The last class is that of the successful workman who sees the next step ahead of him, but has no means of knowing what it would require, either in manipulative skill or in technical knowledge to reach that step.

The results of an effort to find for two types of workmen the kind of information which may be of direct service to them, are shown in Charts IV and V. In order to secure these facts and to place them in uscable form, four steps were needed. (1) A series of conferences was held with a variety of officials and workmen,

Perhaps in no industry could all the lines of possible growth be ascertained or charted. Probably no two men climb to success over exactly the same path in any one industry. But in all, the typical steps in promotion may be discovered and placed at the service of the am-



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When the state accepts her full responsibility, she will make such a definite study of her typical industries as to chart out the steps of advancement, and to show exactly what is required of the young workman in the climb to industrial independence. Then she will help him meet these requirements thru her public schools, thru an investment in trained citizenship. And she will make this study from the standpoint of the worker, for the worth of the individual, for his truest development. When these steps in progress are clearly defined this

knowledge must be so organized and so presented to the worker that he may know exactly what is before him, and just where and when and how and at what cost, in evening or continuation school, in co-operative class work or correspondence study, he may find an open gateway to the knowledge and training required.

Such a course of training, such an organization of our public schools, with the new social viewpoint and the new definite contact with life, will bring increased returns to the commonwealth. It will pay the state, it will pay the industry, it will pay the workman in increased contentment, in satisfaction, in skill. It will produce the trained democracy for which we are all striving.

Summary.

We have tried, then, to say that if the state is to secure adequate return for the money expended on public education, if our schools are to meet the vital needs of today, it will be necessary:

(1) To reorganize the schools on a business basis, to give them the same type of thought, with a view to fitting the product to its needs, as is today put into great industrial enterprises.

(2) To recognize the fact that the vast majority of industrial workers never enter the high school, but leave the grades at 13 or 14 years of age and receive no further educational care.

(3) To realize that if Vocational Training and Guidance are to show us the way out, they must be adapted to the social view-point, they must focus upon the relation of the child to his future life work for the sake of the producer rather than of the product.

(4) To transform the school system, particularly in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades, so that the youth may have an opportunity to gain an understanding of and some preparation for the vocation best adapted to his powers.

(5) To furnish the industrial worker, both before and after employment, with accurate information as to the requirements for entrance and promotion in that place of higher learning called "the job".

(6) To see to it that the state accepts both the opportunity of training the individual for his life work and of extending to him its directing care until he becomes an independent productive unit in society.

(7) To provide this expert guidance thru that fundamental social agency—the public school.

